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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 000239

SIPDIS

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KUALA LUMPUR FOR G.CHAPMAN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: S/CT AMBASSADOR BENJAMIN ROUNDTABLE WITH REGIONAL
DEPUTY CHIEFS OF MISSION

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Classified By: DCM Ted Osius for reasons 1.4(b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Daniel Benjamin met with Deputy Chiefs of Mission from the Southeast Asia Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI) Embassies on December 17, 2009 in Jakarta. The day was split between an internal discussion of regional counterterrorism issues, and an afternoon roundtable on violent extremism.

12. (C) The meetings offered an opportunity to discuss counterterrorism policy and priorities, begin reassessment of the Regional Counterterrorism Guidance Strategy, and consider ways we might better counter violent extremism. Key points included the correlation between domestic national security priorities, which may differ from the U.S., and how those priorities effect counterterrorism engagement and assistance, interagency cooperation among partner nations, and coordination of USG counterterrorism programs. The roundtable on countering violent extremism focused on motivations for radicalism in Indonesia and avoiding complacency in the wake of successful Indonesian counterterrorism activities after the July 17 Jakarta bombings. END SUMMARY.

DCM Roundtable

13. (C) The DCMs from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Embassy representatives from Australia and Singapore participated in this meeting, which Ambassador Benjamin opened by providing the view from Washington and highlighting new counterterrorism policy priorities. Ambassador Benjamin noted that countering violent extremism is a primary component of the new counterterrorism strategy, although he acknowledged that much debate surrounds the question of how best to pursue this objective. He remarked that the strategy must begin with the acknowledgment that any short term tactical counterterrorism success that undermines longer term strategic goals is counterproductive, and we do not want to create ten terrorists for every one we eliminate. Next, working with our partners to increase counterterrorism capacity, whether through military to military programs, Anti-Terrorism Assistance training programs or through rule of law programs, will continue to be a central tenet of our counterterrorism strategy. Finally, working more closely with multilateral

institutions, especially the Counterterrorism Action Group, will be central to our ability to achieving the first two goals.

14. (C) The Deputy Chiefs of Mission each reviewed counterterrorism issues in their country, covering political issues, interagency cooperation at their Embassies, and local conditions for countering terrorism and violent extremism. According to the DCMs, understanding the domestic national security priorities of each country and how they differ from U.S. national security priorities is fundamental to understanding how committed a partner nation may be. These priorities have implications for the way technical assistance is used, and how much political pressure is required to sustain interest in countering terrorism.

15. (C) The DCMs also suggested that conditions that inhibit interagency cooperation within the partner nations, both in the areas of information and resource sharing, can dilute domestic efficiency and regional cooperation. If intelligence services, police, and military within one country do not have organic means and incentives to cooperate, promoting regional cooperation becomes even more difficult. With this in mind, it is important to be cognizant of the way that our relationships and assistance programs can unintentionally distort our official position stating support for civilian control of the military or for the development of rule of law as fundamental in countering terrorism.

16. (C) Noting the many coordinating mechanisms and security programs, the DCMs voiced frustration over the lack of coherent coordination from Washington of security program development and implementation. The number of funding

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mechanisms, the timing of requests, and the different justifications needed to create sustainable and relevant programming is almost too complex. Ambassador Benjamin remarked that while some of the difficulty is inherent in the funding process, the new Sub-Regional Interagency Coordination Group (sub-RICG), which has just been initiated, should be an effective tool for coordinating programs. Additionally, RSI Officer, Greg Chapman, would be in position to assist with the coordination of programs from Embassy Kuala Lumpur, starting with travel to each of the RSI posts starting soon after the new year. Further, Embassy participation in the drafting of the new Regional Guidance Strategy would go a long way toward streamlining the prioritization of resource allocation in the field in the future. The DCMs sought a better understanding of the R Bureau's role in countering violent extremism.

Roundtable on Countering Violent Extremism

17. Ambassador Benjamin, the Deputy Chiefs of Mission, U.S. Embassy representatives from Canberra, Singapore, and Jakarta, S/CT Dan Mahanty, INR's Cambria Hamburg and EAP/RSP officer Stuart Allan, along with International Crisis Group (ICG) Senior Advisor Sidney Jones, and several members of the Australian Mission in Jakarta, including the Deputy Head of Mission, joined the roundtable on countering violent extremism.

18. (C) Counterparts from the Australian Embassy said that 9/11 had changed the way they think about regional conflicts, such as Mindanao and the Maluku, by forcing them to consider the way that regional conflicts correlate to threats elsewhere in the longer term.

19. (C) Having been significantly affected by every major terrorist attack in Indonesia, the Australians candidly remarked that while the timing was unpredictable, the attacks of July 17 themselves were not a surprising development. The

Australians said that they were impressed in general with the Indonesian response to July 17, but suggested that there are still areas for improvement, especially with respect to interagency cooperation. They expressed optimism for the new coordinating agency, but said they were still not sure how the agency would actually look once it was created.

¶10. (C) The Australians noted that radical Islam in Indonesia defies easy categorization. While the counterterrorism success of the Indonesian government seems promising, and while it seems that Jemaah Islamiyah and Noordin Top's group are in decline, we should not mistake a calculated tactical decision not to use violence in the near term for a decision to abdicate the use of violence. There is the possibility, they said, for the terrorists to get knocked down and to come back twice as hard. Finally, the successful prosecution of terrorists has shown that a new Internal Security Act is not needed in Indonesia.

¶11. (C) Speaking about "Life After Noordin Top", Sidney Jones said that the biggest original driver of jihad in Indonesia was the Ambon and Poso conflicts, and so the resolution of those conflicts could be seen as one factor in the weakening of JI's ability to recruit new members. However, she said, we should be wary of new motivations, such as revenge for police success in counterterrorism activities. She speculated that terrorists might target the Indonesian police or government in the future. Jones also noted that attempted religious conversion of Muslims to Christianity should be seen as a key driver of radicalism in certain parts of Indonesia.

¶12. (C) With regard to the structures of the jihadi extremist community, Jones maintained that there are distinct groups that differ in their make-up, targets, and goals. She noted that the groups were fluid as members worked together and sometimes borrowed members, or crossed group lines, but added that there were also rivalries amongst the groups. Jones said that the apparent size and geographical breadth of Top's network was unknown prior to the bombings and that the

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intelligence gap was therefore a concern.

¶13. (C) Commenting on sources of radicalization that deserve future attention, Jones said that terrorist family networks should be considered, as well as the remaining relevance of critical pesantrens, which have still gone largely unaddressed by the Indonesian government. Fifty or so JI-affiliated schools are still the most important factor in the threat. She said that to date, the focus has been on the perpetrators of violence, not on the schools themselves, commenting that the Departments of Education and Religious Affairs had at best provided lip-service to the problem.

¶14. (C) With regard to the role social media plays in extremist circles, Jones said that while Ambon and Poso are not used to cultivate recruits, popular mass media has highlighted the conflicts in Chechnya, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq; one video sold in local markets in Indonesia showed the Abu Sayaff Group as being the one last true committed jihadi group left in Southeast Asia. Jones lamented the fact that the government had not really sought to understand how jihadi publications and materials are distributed, noting that there are still major book launches for extremist literature. Facebook sites are also starting to emerge, including those of released JI prisoners.

¶15. (U) S/CT cleared this message.
HUME